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Subject: U.S.-Romania Partnership for the Welfare of Children
Draft RFA Number: M/OP-00-100A

USAID/Romania intends to issue a Request for Applications (RFA) in October 2000 for the U.S.-Romania Partnership for the Welfare of Children (the "Partnership"). Comments and suggestions are invited on the attached draft program description, objectives and expected results, the Partnership model and selection criteria for the award of a Cooperative Agreement. Comments from prospective partners and other interested parties will be considered for inclusion in the final RFA and should be sent directly to **Eugene Morris, Acting Chief, Office of Democracy and Social Sector Reform, USAID/Romania.** (fax 401-337-2683 or e-mail emorris@usaid.gov).

Sincerely,

Anne Quinlan
Division Chief
M/OP/E&E

Section I: Program Description - Objectives and Results

USAID's present program in child welfare in Romania focuses on creating family and community environments that form the foundation needed to promote and protect the welfare of children. USAID's Strategic Objective is to *Improve the Welfare of Children and Women in Romania*. USAID has identified the following principal sub-objective for the program: *decreased dependency on the use of institutions for children*. To achieve this result, USAID has funded activities to support and develop family-oriented, community-based programs to lessen the dependence on institutions. Assistance has also been provided to help the national and local governments adopt and implement appropriate policies and standards. Grants to U.S. and Romanian NGOs, and technical assistance and training activities for Romanian government agencies and staff have been utilized to achieve the objectives of the program.

USAID intends to continue support to child welfare activities in Romania, with a focus on meeting the needs of Romania's children in a way that prepares them to become productive and responsible citizens. Both short-term humanitarian activities and longer-term development programs are essential elements of the concept. A broad range of activities are envisaged, including prevention of abandonment and institutionalization; development of community-based support systems for children at risk and their families; care of and permanency planning for abandoned and unwanted children; and the development of appropriate policies and standards. The Partnership Program will focus on the positive aspects of promoting family and community responses, building on the growing concept of the role of civil societies in Romania.

Expected results

The following is a list of possible results that the program will strive to achieve:

- reduced number of children in institutions;
- increased number of families receiving assistance within their communities;
- increased number of "at-risk" children who are cared for by means other than institutionalization;
- increased number of children reunited with their natural families;
- expanded range of services offered at the community level;
- increased number of community programs using permanency planning;
- sustainability plans in place for community-based services;
- improved administration of and standards for child welfare programs;
- increased number of counties implementing community-based systems;
- improved system and process for international adoptions in place;
- improved quality of child welfare and family services;
- increased number of children living in permanent situations.

Section II of this draft RFA program description provides USAID's vision of the management approach, organizational structure, network of partners and special features of the Partnership model. Section III provides the proposed selection criteria for the award of a cooperative agreement.

Section II: Program Description - Partnership Concept

Background

For well known historical reasons, Romania has relied heavily on government programs, particularly government-operated institutions, for the care of children who do not live with their biological parents. Deeply rooted attitudes and practices have hindered significant movement nationwide toward the creation of an environment that is family and community-based, focusing on the welfare of children. The Partnership will address several key problems, including excessive reliance on government to administer comprehensive programs for the care of children in need and the promotion of children's welfare. USAID believes that the problem can best be addressed in a coordinated, efficient and sustainable manner through an approach that harnesses the experience, technical expertise and resources of the non-government sector and is focused on family and community-based solutions.

The Partnership will be designed to promote the long-term welfare of Romania's children and youth, while continuing to address short-term needs for the protection of children in crisis situations. It will be a comprehensive program that engages a broad range of partners and provides a broad range of assistance. The program will provide financial resources, primarily through grants, to U.S. and Romanian NGOs and other organizations that are working in the field of children's welfare. The focus of the Partnership program will be on activities that meet the needs of Romania's children in a way that prepares them to become productive and responsible citizens. The program is intended to expand the development of a continuum of family-focused, community-based child welfare services (already initiated by USAID) and will strive to assure that every child at risk has access to a permanent, nourishing family or home environment. It is anticipated that the Partnership will be an inter-sectoral effort, including NGOs, the university and medical communities, private companies, and national and local government groups from the United States and Romania. It will bring together Americans and Romanians who are interested in children's welfare in Romania, including American families who have adopted Romanian children; medical organizations; U.S. NGOs that are interested in working in Romania on children's issues; U.S. businesses and individuals interested in investing or contributing to this sector; U.S. Government agencies; and Romanians of like affiliations and interests. The Partnership will become the centerpiece of USAID's children's welfare program for an estimated five years with proposed funding from USAID of \$15 million.

The Partnership Model

The Partnership will be a non-governmental organization focusing on children's welfare in Romania. A Partnership "Developer" will be selected on a competitive basis to develop and spin off the organization. The Partnership Developer may be an existing or new organization. Initial funding will be provided by a grant (cooperative agreement) from USAID. The Partnership Developer will be expected to bring substantial additional resources to the program through fundraising activities during the course of the program, so that at the end of the fifth year it will be self-sustaining. A Board of Directors, recruited by the USG and the Partnership Developer, will provide executive leadership and direction for the program. The Partnership Developer will be responsible for engaging a network of U.S. and Romanian entities, private and public, to participate in the program ("network partners"). The network partners may be organizations with experience working on child welfare issues in Romania or may be new to the field of child welfare. They may also be organizations that are new to Romania that bring capacity and expertise that will strengthen the program. The Partnership will develop and implement management systems and procedures for the program (e.g., formal organizational structure, working groups/committees to approve sub-grants and other assistance activities, eligibility and selection criteria for sub-grants). The Partnership will also promote and create mechanisms for direct financial contributions by parties other than USAID. By the fifth year, the Partnership should have a sustainable organizational structure in place, including a fundraising program that ensures the availability of reliable and adequate financial resources to continue a comprehensive program of activities in children's welfare with private or other non-USAID contributions.

Characteristics

The proposed organizational structure of the Partnership includes a Board of Directors, which will provide overall leadership, set policy, approve operational procedures, approve criteria for the selection and funding of individual activities, and serve as an advocacy and fundraising body for the Partnership. Ideally, the Board will be comprised of recognized USG experts in children's welfare, senior NGO officials, and representatives from the business community, former statesmen and ex-senior government officials, and representatives from civil society organizations. Representatives from the Romanian and U.S. governments would be non-voting members of the Board. The Board will form a cohesive body of interested and influential persons who can bring significant technical and management expertise, organizational networks, coordinated program approaches, fundraising capabilities and sustainability to the Partnership effort.

The Partnership will be a model for support, networking and voluntary cooperation among various organizations, bringing a wide range of assets to support child welfare. The Partnership will perform the following functions:

- **Fundraising:** Develop and implement a fundraising plan in the United States and Romania.
- **Sub-Grants:** Make sub-grants to Romanian and U.S. non-profit organizations for a variety of activities, including consulting and training.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Develop policy analyses and advocate reform, where appropriate.
- **Public/Private Coordination:** Share information and facilitate networking and coordination among USPVOs, private companies and other groups working in Romania, promoting a more focused and effective public / private effort and a more efficient distribution of resources to meet common objectives.
- **Clearinghouse:** Create a clearinghouse for information and material pertaining to children's welfare issues in Romania.
- **Regional Coordination:** Establish relationships with other countries in the region to exchange information and lessons learned.
- **Media Strategy:** Promote the use media resources in the U.S. and Romania as a means to educate and inform the public.
- **Sustainability:** Develop a plan to sustain the program after the fifth year of USAID funding using public (non-USAID) and private funding mechanisms.

Features of the Partnership Model

-Collaborative Program Development: A Request for Applications (RFA) for a Cooperative Agreement to select the Partnership Developer will be vetted via USAID's website. Interested organizations or individuals are invited to comment on the objectives of the program, the management structure and program approach, or any other feature of the proposed program.

-Fundraising: The Partnership will be required to develop and implement a fundraising plan to bring additional resources to the program.

-Network of Participating Partners: The Partnership will engage a strong network of organizations to become key players ("network partners") in the program. The network "may" include any group or individual interested in assisting with child welfare, including NGOs, private companies, associations, universities, and government agencies. The network approach will help to support the work of these groups in a coordinated fashion, resulting in higher impact and cost efficiencies.

-Sustainability: The nature of the Partnership will enhance sustainability by including a broad spectrum of groups in the design, management and implementation of the program. The Board and partner network created by the Partnership will help ensure that funds can be raised after the end of direct USAID financial support.

Schedule for Program Development

- ✓ August: Draft RFA distributed to potential partners, U.S. Congressional staff and other interested parties for comments.
- ✓ September: Comments consolidated and incorporated into the final RFA.
- ✓ September: RFA issued.
- ✓ November: Selection and negotiation.
- ✓ December: Award of Cooperative Agreement
- ✓ January: Launch U.S.-Romania Partnership (PR and media events).

Section III: Selection Criteria

1. Experience and Management Capacity

- Ability to assemble an influential and prominent group to serve on the Board of Directors (B/D);
- Capacity to engage a diverse group of organizations to achieve common objectives;
- Ability to engage a wide variety of committed organizations such as NGOs, national and local governments, private companies, universities, and interested individuals;
- Ability to develop an organization capable of administering grants/sub-grants and managing financial resources.

2. Understanding of the Partnership Approach and Degree of Innovation in Proposed Strategy for Developing the Partnership

- Vision for developing the Partnership;
- Strategy for recruiting the B/D and defining the Board's role;
- Proposed organizational structure, management procedures, and activity selection processes;
- Timeline for launching Partnership activities in Romania;
- Strategy for expanding the Partnership network.

3. Fundraising Strategy

- Proven fundraising capability and fundraising strategy for this program;
- Plan for cost containment by participating network partners;
- Strategy for leveraging USAID's grant;
- Long-term organizational and financial sustainability plans.

4. Key Personnel

- Qualifications and experience of personnel who will develop the Partnership.